

I am responding to the notice regarding the complaint filed by the California Coalition of Agencies serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing related to VRS interoperability. As a consumer, I am impressed by VRS providers who depend on the quality of their service to attract consumers. I applaud those VRS providers who have worked hard to make their VRS service something that the deaf and hard of hearing community will want to use. I also applaud them for providing webcams or D-Links to the community and accepting the risk that consumers may or may not use their service. For true innovation and fair competition to exist, there must be a level playing field so that all VRS providers can compete by providing innovative services to accomplish the purpose of VRS.

At the same time, I am dismayed that one VRS provider feels it is a sound business practice to force consumers to use their VRS service only. This is tantamount to a phone company offering a phone that can only use their circuits. Hearing people would not tolerate such a restriction on them, so why should the FCC or any other hearing individual accept such restrictions on our deaf and hard of hearing communities? While that may be helpful for the company's profits, I see this as an exploitation of our deaf and hard of hearing communities for the sake of the company's profits which to me is intolerable and certainly not in the spirit of what ADA and TRS was intended to accomplish.

Rather than repeating all of the reasons behind the filing by the CASDHH, let me just say I am in full agreement with them and feel that this provider should be required to open their equipment to allow their consumers to access any and all VRS providers. If their service is good, then the consumer will use their service without the arm-twisting that technological blocking is currently doing. To accept their rationale that consumers can install separate Videophones is equivalent to having separate phones or phone lines in our homes so that we can accept calls from a AT&T consumer or a MCI consumer or a Qwest consumer. The hearing world demands interoperability for their telecommunication needs, so the same standard should be applied to VRS.

As a taxpayer, I am frustrated that my tax dollars are used to support this kind of monopolistic behavior ... especially on the part of a company that already has millions of dollars in other funding. At the same time, VRS providers who do not have the same

outside funding are doing their best to provide quality service and are respecting the consumer's freedom to choose which VRS provider best meets their needs.

I do not think it is fair for other VRS providers to have to provide another videophone just to provide these consumers with another choice. Additionally, it is requiring the other VRS providers to accept some risk that the aforementioned VRS provider will not try to blame them or even take legal action against them if something goes wrong (even innocently) with the consumer's setup in the process of setting up a second videophone. If the FCC does not require them to open up their videophone, we are just opening up another can of worms that will waste the FCC's time, potentially the court's, and for sure the time and resources of the respective VRS providers.

So I ask the commissioners of the FCC: Require that VRS provider (and any other future VRS provider) to open up the videophones and compete on the merits of their VRS service, not compete on the basis of how many consumers they can block into using their service.